

SENT TO
UTAH COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS.

September 20, 1995

Dear :

As you are aware, this Division is currently developing a ground-water management plan for Utah and Goshen Valleys. The main purpose of the plan will be to guide future ground-water development, while at the same time protect the resource from degradation in both quantity and quality. To accomplish this objective, there are some issues that need to be addressed. The purpose of this letter is to make you aware of these issues and to enlist the aid and support of the Utah County Commission in solving the problems those issues represent.

Currently, we are approving small domestic wells to be drilled in rural areas of the county for single family use. The purpose of this policy is to make water available to those who choose to have a "home in the country" where no other water source is available. Unfortunately, I see two problems arising from this policy. First, the policy is being abused by those who are constructing rural subdivisions where every lot is supplied by a small domestic well rather than one central well being used to supply the subdivision. The second problem is related to the first. As I understand it, Utah County's current ordinances require a minimum building lot size of five acres in the unincorporated areas. Given the demand for these rural lots and the rapid rate of population growth, I have to ask if it is wise to have a culinary well and septic system every five hundred feet in the unincorporated parts of the valley. This concern is especially acute in areas of high water table where septic systems tend to be evaporative, rather than percolating as they were intended.

Another problem where Commission's assistance would be helpful is in the area of meeting future water demands in Utah Valley. Currently, water is diverted from the streams and creeks entering the valley according to court decrees and water rights established in the early part of the century. Due to urbanization, many of the lands watered under these decrees are now out of production; however, the water is still being diverted as it was at the turn of the century. My legal counsel advises that this can only be changed by an adjudication of water rights or by the sale and transfer of those rights. Because the adjudication process is so long and cumbersome, it is an ineffective tool in getting water from where it is not being used to where it can be used. People who hold these unused rights need to be encouraged to dispose of them so they can be used. A mechanism needs to be found which will

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enable this to occur without illegal speculation driving those with a legitimate need for water out of the market.

I realize the pressures your county is experiencing concerning residential and commercial development. From current estimates, it appears that Utah County will significantly change from large tracts of agricultural lands to houses, industrial parks, and commercial developments. In order to protect the water resources and ensure adequate supplies of water are available, we need to recognize and plan for these changing conditions. Large quantities of water are used to irrigate lands in Utah and Goshen Valleys. If the water is transferred to meet the changing demands, your county should have water to fulfill its needs and it will also reduce future water conflicts by removing the unused agricultural water right from the records.

I look forward to working with you on the development of the ground-water management plan and look forward to hearing your ideas on these matters. My office will be calling to make an appointment with you, and others you may want to invite to a meeting.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Morgan, P.E.
State Engineer

RLM:wes:nj